

The Chinese of the Pacific Coast.

No portion of the American Continent presents so many and varied contrasts as the Pacific Coast, both as to its physical features and the people who inhabit it. There are broad, fertile valleys resplendent with beautiful gardens and rich with every variety of Mother Earth's choicest products; there are trackless deserts devoid of all vegetation; there are low vine-clad hills, charming in their picturesque beauty; there are grim, lofty mountains, awe-inspiring in their dignity and grandeur; there is a climate in endless diversity—one may revel in the perpetual sunshine of California's cloudless skies, or he may enjoy the delights of perpetual rain in the sunless regions of Oregon.

And so, in the civilization of the West, there may be seen as great contrasts as in the country. Here may be met representatives from every State in the Union; on our streets may be encountered people from every nationality on the globe; here the young and ambitious Occident exchanges salutations across the sea with the self-complacent Orient—and even more than this: on our own soil we see a strange commingling of the *newest* and the *oldest* civilization of the world. But of all the foreign people who may be seen on our shores none are so interesting as the Chinese. It is of these strange little yellow men I am to speak to-day.

The Chinese are undoubtedly the most peculiar people on the face of the earth, and, because of their peculiar characteristics, they are the least known and the most misunderstood of all the alien races that have sought refuge within our borders.

In order to fully understand the present status of the Chinese on the Pacific Coast, it is necessary to know something first of their past and the part they played in our early history. Just a half century ago, attracted by the discovery of gold in California, John Chinaman made his first appearance on American soil. In those days of our undeveloped resources, when white laborers were unattainable, and when cheap labor was absolutely essential to the material development of the great West, the Chinaman readily found employment; he was a most welcome addition to our population then, and as his number increased he became an important factor in the industrial life of the Coast States.

Whatever may be said against the Chinaman as a successful competitor with the white laborer, and whatever there may be of justice in the arguments adduced, candor forces us to admit that the Chinese have been of very great advantage to the industrial interests of the Coast. They rendered possible the inauguration and maintenance of many business enterprises which could not otherwise have been attempted; their service in railroad building, mining and agriculture has aided more than any other influence toward that rapid growth and prosperity of our country, of which we are so justly proud. It was only when they grew so numerous as to become a disturbing element in our economic conditions that they met with public disfavor, which led finally to the passage of our present Chinese exclusion laws.

As nearly as can be estimated from the census of 1890, there are about 130,000 Chinese in the United States, more than 75,000 of these being on the Pacific Coast. It is believed by competent authorities that this number is increasing at the rate of 15,000 or 20,000 annually. They state that, in spite of the exclusion law, thousands are continually smuggled across the borders of British America and Mexico; that every Oriental steamer arriving at San Francisco lands four or five hundred a month; the natural shrewdness of the Celestial, aided by his similarity of physical feature and his utter disregard for truth, enable him to evade the vigilance of the custom-house officials.

One of the most perplexing questions that has ever presented itself to the American people for solution is that of foreign immigration, and it yet remains an unsolved problem. If our government is powerless to prevent any class of foreigners coming to this country, who are a danger to our social, moral and political life, we are confronted by a question of alarming significance. While willing to admit that the Chinese possess some virtues superior to those of other foreigners, we must recognize the fact that they are a greater menace to our national institutions because more difficult of assimilation with our own people.

In extending to other races an invitation to our shores, it is the hope and expectation of our government that they will, in time, become assimilated with our own population. This is usually the result. The most ignorant from Europe, Africa,

Australia, and almost every part of the world, assimilate our ideas after a time and become an integral part of our great commonwealth.

Not so with the Chinese; they mingle with no other race; they are hostile to Western thought. Here on the Pacific slope there exists in reality a small but growing Chinese Empire. They are building cities after the manner of those in their native land; they are establishing business according to their own ideas; they are governing their own people by means of secret societies and tribunals, whose laws are antagonistic to the principles of a Christian nation; they are enforcing a heathen religion within the sound of our church bells,—in fact, they are perpetuating all the customs and institutions of a pagan land and indulging in all the habits and vices of heathen civilization. The tendency of all this must naturally be enormously toward evil.

Then again, the Chinese are a danger to our social life, because they threaten to disturb the equilibrium of our industrial conditions. As a laboring class, they are slowly and stealthily entrenching themselves in our midst. There is no line of industry and no branch of agriculture in which the Chinaman is not employed.

He is in popular demand, not only because he can furnish the best cheap labor, but because of his many excellent traits. In power of imitation and plodding industry, he is superior to all other foreigners of the working class. He is honest, patient and thorough; he never gets drunk and he never goes on a strike. As a laundryman and as a house servant, he is a precious boon to the Western housewife. With the growing distaste of the American girl for domestic service, John bids fair, in the not distant future, to reign supreme in the culinary art. In cleanliness, frugality and power to tempt the appetite, they are simply unequalled by any other class of servants, and the only reason they are not more extensively employed in our households is the high wages they demand and receive.

Another danger to our nation's welfare from the presence of these people is their influence in political affairs. But he can not vote, you say. True, but he can buy another's vote. Through the workings of their secret societies, known as the "The Six Companies," they are the most thoroughly organ-

ized of all our alien population. Whenever an issue is before the public mind, by which their interests are affected, the powerful influence of these Six Companies is soon felt. It is said that long before the Geary Act was presented to Congress, it was discussed in the secret councils of the Six Companies. They sent agents everywhere to arouse sentiment against their exclusion and for years prevented unfavorable legislation.

The most serious aspect of these conditions, however, is found in the presence of a large number of *native-born* Chinese in this country. These are American citizens, entitled to vote, hold office—to all the privileges of American citizenship. In San Francisco alone there are more than two thousand of these native Chinese. Some of them are voters now, and who knows but that in a decade they may control the city elections.

Can a greater peril to the perpetuity of our republic be imagined than to permit a people while yet heathen in their religious beliefs, debased in their moral standards, to enter our legislative halls and sit in our courts of justice? What one of you would like to stand before a pagan judge or be amenable to laws framed by a heathen statesman? This may seem an exaggeration, but such are the possible conditions of the future, with the enfranchisement of the Chinaman.

There is still another phase of this subject too awful to depict in its folliness, and that is their moral degradation and its baneful influence upon those with whom they come in contact. Do you realize that the Chinese practice polygamy and indulge in human slavery in open defiance of the laws? A Chinaman seldom brings his family with him from China, but their code of morals permits him to have one or more secondary wives; the children of these wives are considered legitimate, but the relation of the wives to him is that of concubinage; he can discard them at will and when so deserted their only alternative is a life of shame.

When missionary work among the Chinese was begun in San Francisco, it was discovered that in certain parts of Chinatown, there existed a regular slave market, where young women and girls were auctioned off to the highest bidder at prices varying from a few hundred dollars to two or three thousand dollars apiece, according to their physical charms. This iniquitous traffic in the honor and virtue of Chinese womanhood is carried on systematically at the present time

by an organization known as Highbinders. These women are kidnapped in China, passed through our Custom Houses on false oaths and sold for a purpose compared to which death would be a happy release. Some of the mission workers claim that the better class of Chinese do all in their power to suppress this revolting business, while we, as a Christian people, do little or nothing to prevent it. In case of the escape of an unwilling victim, the processes of our courts are frequently used to recapture her and place her back in her awful bondage. Many instances of this kind have come to my notice here in the courts of Los Angeles.

There is no more interesting spot in San Francisco than Chinatown. I refer to San Francisco because it is the Chinese metropolis of the Coast. Right in the heart of this great American city exists another city with nearly forty thousand inhabitants, displaying all the characteristics of Chinese civilization. According to the latest statistics there were in this heathen city 2 theaters, 13 joss-houses, 16 opium dens, 110 gambling holes, 246 manufactories, besides innumerable restaurants and shops.

The squalid streets, the obnoxious odors, the jostling crowds, silently pursuing their devious ways, indifferent to all that shuts them in, speak of the unchanged and unchangeable nature of our Celestial neighbors. Beside their extreme licentiousness, the most glaring sins of the Chinese are opium-smoking and gambling. The extent to which these vices are being spread among the youth of our cities is something appalling.

In view of all these facts, what must be done to avert these impending evils? The integrity of our moral and religious character as a Christian nation must be preserved. The gravity of the situation is emphasized, also, by the present trouble in China. Some eminent writers have predicted that if the European Powers succeed in the dismemberment of the empire, the Chinese will migrate to all parts of the world. By reason of our location and the opportunities afforded as a field of labor for foreigners, the Pacific Coast will be deluged by a great inpouring of Chinamen.

In what, then, lies our hope of escape? There can be but one answer—the transforming power of the Gospel. Christianize and educate the Chinaman, making him fit to be a citizen of the United States, and these dangers will be largely removed.

Napoleon, in his lonely exile on St. Helena, while watching the progress of human events, said one day: "When China is moved, it will change the face of the globe." Is not this prophecy being fulfilled to day? Toward China the eyes of the civilized world are now turned, watching every movement of the great commercial powers engaged in the bloody conflict.

Let us bear in mind, however, that a higher motive than self-preservation impels us to evangelize these strangers within our gates. "Of one blood made He all the nations of the earth," is the word of the Scripture. We are united to them by a common Fatherhood and bound to them by the ties of a common brotherhood. God and humanity demand that every consistent effort be put forth to open their dark minds to the truth and blessedness of the Gospel.

The gratifying success which has attended missionary effort in San Francisco, Los Angeles and other places, is sufficient proof of their susceptibility to Christian teaching. There are now more than twelve hundred consecrated Chinese in San Francisco, and a corresponding number in other places, according to the effort made. Owing to their extremely conservative nature, they are difficult to approach, but when once reached they are eager to learn the Scriptures and are very appreciative of any effort made in their behalf.

It is a cause for much regret that in proportion to the population of the Chinese, comparatively little is being done towards their evangelization. Christian men and women need to be aroused to a deeper sense of their obligation toward their Chinese brethren.

My Christian sisters, what is our duty to these thousands of degraded beings, whom the surging waves of human events have left upon our shores? Does not the degradation of Chinese women under the flag of the most highly-enlightened nation in the world thrill your soul with horror and fill your heart with the deepest compassion?

This has been a wonderful century of progress and opportunity for women, and in His kind providence God has called us into wider fields of usefulness in His kingdom. May He give us courage and strength to lift the burden of sin and suffering from these poor, unhappy ones at our very door.

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